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ABSTRACT

This kit is the first in a series intended to help classroom teachers think through possibilities for religion study in elementary-level social studies and use the instructional materials developed by the Religion in Elementary Social Studies Project (RESS). The entire RESS project will be available through ERIC and consists of six classroom material packages for grades 1-6, four of which are multimedia teacher training kits. This first booklet contains four major sections which assist the teacher of RESS materials and the parents of children studying the materials. Consisting of a booklet and one audio-cassette (not available through ERIC), this first unit of the kit presents the Supreme Court's opinion on the Schempp and Murray cases for analysis, offers diverse definitions of religion so that participants may refine their own definition, discusses several views of objectivity in light of the Court's usage in the context of religion study, and urges participants to develop and warrant their views on religion study in elementary social studies. Audiovideo tapes supplement the materials and are available from the Division of Instructional Research and Service, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida 32306, after August 1976. The second part of the document is an evaluation report of the materials of Kit 1 by religion scholars and educators and by 100 preservice teachers in university classes. (Author/JR)

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RELIGION: WHAT IS IT?

Religion in Elementary Social Studies
Teacher Self-Instructional Kit I

Prepared By

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U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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RELIGION IN ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES
Religion-Social Studies Curriculum Project
The Florida State University
Tallahassee, Florida

1972 - 1975

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A FORWARD

"One's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistent with the First Amendment. But the exercises here do not fall into those categories. They are religious exercises required by the States in violation of the command of the First Amendment that the Government maintain strict neutrality, neither aiding nor opposing religion."

- Justice Clark, 1963 Schempp Decision

The teacher is an immediately personal symbol of the educational process, a figure with whom students can identify and compare themselves. Who is not able to recall the impact of some particular teacher -- an enthusiast, a devotee of a point of view, a disciplinarian whose ardor came for love of a subject, a playful but serious mind? There are many images, and they are precious.

- Jerome S. Bruner, The Process of Education

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INTRODUCTION

This Kit is the first in a series intended to assist classroom teachers in thinking through possibilities for religion-study at elementary level social studies and in using the instructional materials developed by the Religion in Elementary Social Studies Project (RESS).

This booklet contains four major sections which will assist the teacher of RESS materials, and the parents of children studying the materials, in answering the following questions:

1. May we teach about religion in public schools without violating Supreme Court decisions and the traditional American concept of the separation of church and state?

2. What is the nature and content of religion? What is its significance for understanding human behavior and culture?

3. What is the "objective" study of religion?

4. Why should religion be taught within the elementary school social studies program?

These questions indicate that our concern is with religion in so far as it is part of the regular instructional program, that is with study about religion, teaching about religion, and learning about religion. Both "objective study of religion" and "appreciative study of religion" are concerned neither with the practice of religion (i.e., Bible reading, prayer, assembly programs) nor with teaching commitment to a particular religious tradition, as exemplified in shared time, released time, special courses and programs in religion. This study focuses on course content, experiences, and reflective-inquiry processes which are part of the regular program of instruction in an elementary school--the social studies curriculum.

The following list of General Objectives indicate the emphases for this Kit. Throughout the Kit study questions focus the readers' attention on important points. We have also included several informal self-evaluation exercises. Two complementary brief cassette tapes may be used with this booklet in order to help clarify issues raised in Sections A and B.

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General Objectives

After reading the material provided in this Kit, each participant will be able to:

1. Summarize the Supreme Court's interpretation of the First Amendment to the Constitution which led to the prohibition of the practice of religion in public schools when sponsored by the state (i.e., prescribed reading of the Bible and prayer).

2. State the Court's opinion regarding the significance of learning about religion in public school educational programs.

3. Distinguish between a "community of learning" and a "community of believers" in order to understand the proper role of religion in public education.

4.. Define "objectivity" and show how an "objective" study of religion may also include an "appreciative" study of religion.

5. State several definitions of "religion" which are appropriate as guides for instructional programs about religion in public education.

6. Take a stand on teaching about religion in the regular social studies program in elementary schools, and offer a supporting argument for your position.

A. MAY WE TEACH ABOUT RELIGION...LEGALLY?

Before we begin in earnest, let's see where you "are at." Read each of the following and note your immediate reaction.

	Think so	Think not	Undecided
1. Teachers may not mention their religious beliefs to students.			
2. No religious leader may enter a classroom and talk about religion.			
3. The Bible and other sacred literature are prohibited in libraries and classrooms.			
4. No teacher may assign students to read the Bible or any sacred literature.			
5. Teachers and students can't be objective about religion.			
6. Study of religion is acceptable if no mention is made of the Christian religion.			
7. Study of prayer and worship is not allowed in public schools.			
8. Regular social studies courses rarely need to mention religion.			
9. Some religions are quite impossible to study in the classroom.			
10. A person has to belong to a particular religion in order to study it.			

If you checked "Think not" for each of the items on the previous page, you are off to a good start. If you were often "Undecided" or checking the "Think so" column, this section of the Kit is for you.

The title of Bob Dylan's folk song, "The Times They Are A-Changing," suggests not only obvious changes in our society, such as technological advance, environmental crisis, black power, women's liberation, and peace movements but also the current situation of public education. Formerly, public education in the United States had to create a unity out of a great diversity of immigrant peoples; America was a great melting pot and public education enabled assimilation. But now that our nation has, at least in some sense, "arrived," its citizens face the formidable task of deciding where and how to go from here. We have to make difficult, delicate judgments and decisions about political, economic, and ethical matters. The times are a-changing in that today the public schools, instead of having to nurture a consensus of values, are having to create a context for value formation. This observation is not the whole story, but it is partially the context for the Supreme Court's clear, emphatic decisions in 1962 and 1963--public education should be concerned not with the practice of religion, blessing the values of American society, but with the study of religion, inquiring about sources of values in mankind's religious heritage. Moreover, this gradual shift of focus in education is one cause of growing public confusion and mistrust toward education in general.

The Supreme Court rulings of the early 1960's concerning the role of religion in the public schools have caused considerable consternation. The mass media have amply reported the irritation of parent and religious groups who desire the continued practice of religion--their religion--in the public schools. These groups expect the public institutions to reflect and reinforce the religious commitments of the home and church. However, the Supreme Court in its decisions reinforced the application of the First Amendment to the Constitution and the pluralistic nature of twentieth century America by prohibiting the public schools from religious indoctrination, and specifically from conducting religious worship activities (i.e., Bible reading and the recitation of the Lord's Prayer, or any State prescribed prayer).

A second concern less well-known and not so captivating to the mass media, concerns the absence of study about religion in the curriculum of public schools. Confusion over the Supreme Court decisions--after one decade--continues among public educators. In thinking that the schools must "stay away" from religion, educators have banished not only the practice of religion, but also the study of religion, from the curriculum and from instructional materials. Actually, the Court, while prohibiting the practice of religion, encouraged educators to help students learn about religion in a "secular program of education." A program can be constructed to promote the understanding of religious phenomena and the role of religion in history and contemporary events. Individuals and groups who encourage the study of religion in schools continually confront this misunderstanding of the Court's decisions. Meanwhile, religion is simply being ignored in the education of today's students.

THE COURT SPEAKS

With a momentous decision in 1962, the United States Supreme Court held that the twenty-two word prayer used in New York State Public Schools' opening exercise was unconstitutional. This decision, known as Engel v. Vitale, the "Engel" case, and the "Regent's Prayer" case, immediately aroused controversy throughout the land. The practice of religion in the public schools was challenged, in part, with the reasoning that

> When the power, prestige, and financial support of government is placed behind a particular religious belief, the indirect coercive pressure upon religious minorities to conform to the prevailing officially approved religion is plain.

One year later, at noon on June 17, 1963, the Court handed down a decision on two controversial cases: Abington v. Schempp and Murray v. Curlett. Again, the practice of religion in the public schools was questioned by the two cases, specifically the required reading of the Bible and the use of the Lord's Prayer in opening exercises. The Court's decision declared that the practice of religion in public education was unconstitutional. Public reaction was mixed and often heated. The afternoon newspapers carried wire service reports, and on the morning of June 18th newspapers carried the immediate reactions of many religious and political leaders.

The Abington v. Schempp and Murray v. Curlett cases were decided, in one opinion, eight to one. Chief Justice Warren and Associate Justices Black, Brennan, Douglas, Goldberg, Harlan, and White joined with Justice Clark who wrote the opinion of the Court. Justice Brennan wrote a 76-page concurring opinion. Justice Douglas wrote a three-page separate concurrence. And Justice Goldberg wrote a four-page concurring opinion in which he was joined by Justice Harlan. Justice Stewart wrote a dissenting opinion.

As you read the following edited version of the majority opinion of the Court, think about your answers to these questions:

1. In the Murray and the Schempp cases what were the major issues?
   a) study of religions?
   b) practice of religion in public schools by individuals?
   c) government policies dictating the practice of religion in public schools by teachers and students?

2. What constitutional principles did the Court apply in considering its decision on these cases?

3. How did the Court distinguish between the practice of one's religion and the study of religions?

4. What was the Court's position on learning about religions? What seems to be the basis for the Court's position?

5. How would you distinguish between what is appropriate for a community of learning (an educational community in a public institution) from what may be appropriate for a community of believers (a religious community)?

MR. JUSTICE CLARK delivered the opinion of the Court.

Once again we are called upon to consider the scope of the provision of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution which declares that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...." These companion cases present the issues in the context of state action requiring that schools begin each day with readings from the Bible. While raising the basic questions under slightly different factual situations, the cases permit of joint treatment. In light of the history of the First Amendment and of our cases interpreting and applying its requirements, we hold that the practices at issue and the laws requiring them are unconstitutional under the Establishment Clause, as applied to the states through the Fourteenth Amendment.

The Facts in Each Case: No. 142. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by law ... requires that "At least ten verses from the Holy Bible shall be read, without comment, at the opening of each public school on each school day. Any child shall be excused from such Bible reading, or attending such Bible reading, upon the written request of his parent or guardian." The Schempp family, husband and wife and two of their three children, brought suit to enjoin enforcement of the statute, contending that their rights under the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States are, have been, and will continue to be violated unless this stature be declared unconstitutional as violative of these provisions of the First Amendment. They sought to enjoin

the appellant school district, wherein the Schempp children attend school, and its officers and the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth from continuing to conduct such readings and recitation of the Lord's Prayer in the public schools of the district pursuant to the statute. A three-judge statutory District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania held that the statute is violative of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment as applied to the States by the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and directed that appropriate injunctive relief issue. On appeal by the District, its officials and the Superintendent, we noted probable jurisdiction.

The appellees Edward Lewis Schempp, his wife Sidney, and their children, Roger and Donna, are of the Unitarian faith and are members of the Unitarian Church in Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where they, as well as another son, Ellory, regularly attend religious services. The latter was originally a party but having graduated from the school system pendente lite was voluntarily dismissed from the action. The other children attend the Abington Senior High School, which is a public school operated by appellant district.

On each school day at the Abington Senior High School between 8:15 and 8:30 a.m., while the pupils are attending their home rooms or advisory sections, opening exercises are conducted pursuant to the statute. The exercises are broadcast into each room in the school building through an intercommunications system and are conducted under the supervision of a teacher by students attending the school's radio and television workshop. Selected students from this course gather each morning in the school's workshop studio for the exercises, which include readings by one of the students of 10 verses of the Holy Bible, broadcast to each room in the building. This is followed by the recitation of the Lord's Prayer, likewise over the intercommunications system, but also by the students in the various classrooms, who are asked to stand and join in repeating the prayer in unison. The exercises are closed with the flag salute and such pertinent announcements as are of interest to the students. Participation in the opening exercises, as directed by the statute, is voluntary. The student reading the verses from the Bible may select the passages and read from any version he chooses, although the only copies furnished by the school are the King James version, copies of which were circulated to each teacher by the school district. During the period in which the exercises have been conducted the King James, the Douay and the Revised Standard versions of the Bible have been used, as well as the Jewish Holy Scriptures. There are no prefatory statements no questions asked or solicited, no comments or explanations made and no interpretations given at or during the exercises. The students and parents are advised that the student may absent himself from the classroom or, should he elect to remain, not participate in the exercises....

At the first trial Edward Schempp and the children testified as to specific religious doctrines purveyed by a literal reading of the Bible "which were contrary to the religious beliefs which they held and to their familial teaching." The children testified that all of the doctrines to which they referred were read to them at various times as part of the exercises. Edward Schempp testified at the second trial that he had considered having Roger and Donna excused from attendance at the exercises but decided against it for several reasons, including his belief that the children's relationships with their teachers and classmates would be adversely affected....

The trial court, in striking down the practices and the statute requiring them, made specific findings of fact that the children's attendance at Abington Senior High School is compulsory and that the practice of reading 10 verses from the Bible is also compelled by law. It also found that:

> "The reading of the verses, even without comment, possesses a devotional and religious character and constitutes in effect a religious observance. The devotional and religious nature of the morning exercises is made all the more apparent by the fact that the Bible reading is followed immediately by a recital in unison by the pupils of the Lord's Prayer. The fact that some pupils, or theoretically all pupils, might be excused from attendance at the exercises does not mitigate the obligatory nature of the ceremony for ... Section 1516 ... unequivocally requires the exercises to be held every school day in every school in the Commonwealth. The exercises are held in the school buildings and perforce are conducted by and under the authority of the local school authorities and during school sessions. Since the statute requires the reading of the 'Holy Bible,' a Christian document, the practice... prefers the Christian religion. The record demonstrates that it was the intention of ... the Commonwealth ... to introduce a religious ceremony into the public schools of the Commonwealth."

No. 119. In 1905 the Board of School Commissioners of Baltimore City adopted a rule pursuant to Art. 77, 202 of the Annotated Code of Maryland. The rule provided for the holding of opening exercises in the schools of the city consisting primarily of the "reading, without comment, of a chapter in the Holy Bible and/or the use of the Lord's Prayer."

The petitioners, Mrs. Madalyn Murray and her son, William J. Murray, III, are both professed atheists. Following unsuccessful attempts to have the respondent school board rescind the rule this suit was filed for mandamus to compel its rescission and cancellation. It was alleged that William was a student in a public school of the city and Mrs. Murray, his mother, was a taxpayer therein; that it was the practice under the rule to have a reading on each school morning from the King James version of the Bible; that at petitioners'

insistence the rule was amended to permit children to be excused from the exercise on request of the parent and that William had been excused pursuant thereto; that nevertheless the rule as amended was in violation of the petitioners' rights "to freedom of religion under the First and Fourteenth Amendments" and in violation of "the principle of separation between church and state, contained therein...." The petition particularized the petitioners' atheistic beliefs and stated that the rule, as practiced, viclated their rights

> "In that it threatens their religious liberty by placing a premium on belief as against non-belief and subjects their freedom of conscience as the rule of the majority; it pronounces belief in God as the source of all moral and spiritual values, equating these values with religious values, and thereby renders sinister, alien and suspect the beliefs and ideals of.... Petitioners, promoting doubt and question of their morality, good citizenship and good faith."

The respondents demurred and the trial court, recognizing that the demurrer admitted all facts well pleaded, sustained it without leave to amend. The Maryland Court of Appeals affirmed, the majority of four justices holding the exercise not in violation of the First and Fourteenth Amendments, with three justices dissenting....

It is true that religion has been closely identified with our history and government. As we said in Engel v. Vitale (1962), "The history of man is inseparable from the history of religion. And ... since the beginning of that history many people have devoutly believed that 'More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of....'"

This is not to say, however, that religion has been so identified with our history and government that religious freedom is not likewise as strongly imbedded in our public and private life. Nothing but the most telling of personal experiences in religious persecution suffered by our forebears, could have planted our belief in liberty of religious opinion any more deeply in our heritage....

Almost a hundred years ago in Minor v. Board of Education of Cincinnati, Judge Alphonzo Taft, father of the revered Chief Justice, in an unpublished opinion stated the ideal of our people as to religious freedom as one of

> "absolute equality before the law of all religious opinions and sects...."
>
> "The government is neutral, and, while protecting all, it prefers none, and it disparages none"....

..., in Engel v. Vitale, only last year, these principles were so universally recognized that the Court without the citation of a single case and over the sole dissent of Mr. JUSTICE STEWART, reaffirmed them. The Court found the 22-word prayer used in "New York's program of daily classroom invocation of God's blessings as prescribed in the Regents' prayer ... (to be) a religious activity." It held that "it is no part of the business of government to compose official prayers for any group of the American people to recite as a part of a religious program carried on by the government." In discussing the reach of the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses of the First Amendment the Court said:

> Although these two clauses may in certain instances overlap, they forbid two quite different kinds of governmental encroachment upon religious freedom. The Establishment Clause, unlike the Free Exercise Clause, does not depend upon any showing of direct governmental compulsion and is violated by the enactment of laws which establish an official religion whether those laws operate directly to coerce non-observing individuals or not. This is not to say, of course, that laws officially prescribing a particular form of religious worship do not involve coercion of such individuals. When the power, prestige and financial support of government is placed behind a particular religious belief, the indirect coercive pressure upon religious minorities to conform to the prevailing officially approved religion is plain.

And in further elaboration the Court found that the "first and most immediate purpose (of the Establishment Clause) rested on a belief that a union of government and religion tends to destroy government and to degrade religion." When government, the Court said, allies itself with one particular form of religion, the inevitable result is that it incurs "the hatred, disrespect and even contempt of those who held contrary beliefs."...

The wholesome "neutrality" of which this Court's cases speak thus stems from a recognition of the teaching of history that powerful sects of groups might bring about a fusion of governmental and religious functions or a concert or dependency of one upon the other to the end that official support of the state of Federal Government would be placed behind the tenents of one or of all orthodoxies. This the Establishment Clause prohibits. And a further reason for neutrality is found in the Free Exercise Clause, which recognizes the value of religious training, teaching and observance, and more particularly, the right of every person to freely choose his own course with reference thereto, free of any compulsion from the state. This the Free Exercise Clause guarantess. Thus, as we have seen, the two clauses may overlap. As we have indicated, the Establishment Clause has been directly considered by this Court eight

times in the past score of years and, with only one Justice dissenting on the point, it has consistently held that the clause withdrew all legislative power respecting religious belief or the expression thereof. The test may be stated as follows: what are the purpose and the primary effect of the enactment? If either is the advancement or inhibition of religion then the enactment exceeds the scope of legislative power as circumscribed by the Constitution. That is to say that to withstand the strictures of the Establishment Clause there must be a secular legislative purpose and a primary effect that neither advances nor inhibits religion. The Free Exercise Clause, likewise considered many times here, withdraws from legislative power, state and federal, the exertion of any restraint on the free exercise of religion. Its purpose is to secure religious liberty in the individual by prohibiting any invasions thereof by civil authority. Hence it is necessary in a free exercise case for one to show the coercive effect of the enactment as it operates against him in the practice of his religion. The distinction between the two clauses is apparent - a violation of the Free Exercise Clause is predicated on coercion while the Establishment Clause violation need not be so attended.

Applying the Establishment Clause principles to the cases at bar we find that the States are requiring the selection and reading at the opening of the school day of verses from the Holy Bible and the recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the students in unison. These exercises are prescribed as part of the curricular activities of students who are required by law to attend school. They are held in the school buildings under the supervision and with the participation of teachers employed in those schools....

The trial court in No. 142 has found that such an opening exercise is a religious ceremony and was intended by the State to be so. We agree with the trial court's finding as to the religious character of the exercises. Given that finding the exercises and the law requiring them are in violation of the Establishment Clause.

There is no such specific finding as to the religious character of the exercises in No. 119, and the State contends (as does the State in No. 142) that the program is an effort to extend its benefits to all public school children without regard to their religious belief. Included within its secular purposes, it says, are the promotion of moral values, the contradiction to the materialistic trends of our times, the perpetuation of our institutions and the teaching of literature. The case came up on demurrer, of course, to a petition which alleged that the uniform practice under the rule had been to read from the King James version of the Bible and that the exercise was sectarian. The short answer, therefore, is that the religious character of the exercise was admitted by the State. But even if its purpose is not strictly religious, it is sought to be accomplished through readings, without comment, from the Bible. Surely the place of the Bible as an instrument of religion cannot be gainsaid, and the State's recognition of the pervading religious

character of the ceremony is evident from the rule's specific permission of the alternative use of the Catholic Douay version as well as the recent amendment permitting nonattendance at the exercises. None of these factors are consistent with the contention that the Bible is here used either as an instrument for nonreligious moral inspiration or as a reference for the teaching of secular subjects.

The conclusion follows that in both cases the laws require religious exercises and such exercises are being conducted in direct violation of the right of the appellees and petitioners. Nor are these required exercises mitigated by the fact that individual students may absent themselves upon parental request, for that fact furnishes no defense to a claim of unconstitutionality under the Establishment Clause. Further, it is no defense to urge that the religious practices here may be relatively minor encroachments on the First Amendment. The breach of neutrality that is today a trickling stream may all too soon become a raging torrent and, in the words of Madison, "it is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties."

It is insisted that unless these religious exercises are permitted, a "religion of secularism" is established in the schools. We agree of course that the State may not establish a "religion of secularism" in the sense of affirmatively opposing or showing hostility to religion, thus "preferring those who believe in no religion over those who do believe."

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We do not agree, however, that this decision in any sense has that effect. In addition, it might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistent with the First Amendment. But the exercises, here do not fall into those categories. They are religious exercises, required by the States in violation of the command of the First Amendment that the Government maintain strict neutrality, neither aiding nor opposing religion.

Finally, we cannot accept that the concept of neutrality, which does not permit a State to require a religious exercise even with the consent of the majority of those affected, collides with the majority's right to free exercise of religion. While the Free Exercise Clause clearly prohibits the use of state action to deny the rights of free exercise to anyone, it has never meant that a majority could use the machinery of the State to practice its beliefs. Such a contention was effectively answered by Mr. Justice Jackson for the Court in West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette:

> "The very purpose of a Bill of Rights was to withdraw certain subjects from the vicissitudes of political controversy, to place them beyond the reach of majorities and officials and to establish them as legal principles to be applied by the courts. One's right to ... freedom of worship ... and other fundamental rights may not be submitted to vote; they depend on the outcome of no elections."

The place of religion in our society is an exalted one, achieved through a long tradition of reliance on the home, the church, and the inviolable citadel of the individual heart and mind. We have come to recognize through bitter experience that it is not within the power of government to invade that citadel, whether its purpose of effect be to aid or oppose, to advance or retard. In the relationship between man and religion, the State is firmly committed to a position of neutrality. Though the application of that rule requires interpretation of a delicate sort, the rule itself is clearly and concisely stated in the words of the First Amendment. Applying that rule to the facts of these cases, we affirm the judgment in No. 142. In No. 119, the judgment is reversed and the cause remanded to the Maryland Court of Appeals for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

It is so ordered.

SELF-EVALUATION FOR SECTION A

1. Now that you have carefully read Section A, containing the majority opinion of the Supreme Court in the Murray and Schempp cases, you might listen to the first part of Side A, Cassette Tape #1. Sam Duker, professor at Brooklyn College, discusses his understanding of the Court's concerns about religion in public education. As you listen to Professor Duker, see if your understanding is consistent with his. If differences arise, go back and skim over the decision reprinted in Section A.

2. Review your answers to the study questions printed at the beginning of Section A. (p.6). What are your answers? Check them out by considering the following:

   Question 1 The major issue involved the policies of government which dictated the practice of religion and prescribed certain forms and functions for that practice on the part of teachers and students (i.e., what to read and when, what, and how to pray).

   Question 2 The Court was concerned with the First Amendment as applied to the states by the Fourteenth Amendment; and specifically with the Establishment and the Free Exercise clauses in the First Amendment.

   Question 3 See the last three paragraphs of the Court's opinion.

   Question 4 See the last three paragraphs of the Court's opinion. The Court encourages the study of religions as part of one's education. The principle implied is "Since religion plays an important role in our history and cultures, and since educated persons need to understand their history, cultures, and their significance, then, the study of religions is appropriate to, and ought to be studied in, regular programs of public education."

   Question 5 To make such distinctions, try this principle: The Latin root of education means "to bring forth" and the educational community functions to bring forth varieties of phenomena and beliefs to promote inquiry and understanding. The Latin root of religion is "to tie together" and the community of believers functions to promote specific commitments and ways of being in the world.

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B. DEFINING RELIGION: WHAT COUNTS AS "RELIGION?"

The Supreme Court uses the term "religion." Although we often use the same term, what does "religion" mean? Are we using the word in the same way, including the same phenomena under the term?

To raise such questions is not to play semantic games. How we define religion will affect what we elect to include when we teach about religion or seek to learn about it. Also, and just as crucial, our definition of religion reveals our perceptions of phenomena we label religion. These perceptions are colored by our past experiences and our attitudes, which ought to be critically examined before teaching about religion. The following questions provide a basis for reflection and critical examination of one's definition and the pre-conceptions the definition may reveal.*

1. I would define religion in this way:

2. Here are eight things I would include under my definition of religion:

3. Does my definition reduce religion to what I experience by accident of birth and socialization?

4. Does my definition reflect a bias--positive or negative, for or against--religion as a whole or toward particular religious traditions and certain religious phenomena?

5. Does my definition of religion limit religion to what it has been in the past or in my experience, or does it include emerging forms of religion in the United States and throughout the world?

6. Does my definition have sufficient precision? Does it help me to say what counts as "religion" and what doesn't?

*See Frederick J.Streng, Charles L. Lloyd, Jr., and Jay T. Allen, editors Ways of Being Religious: Readings for a New Approach to Religion (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), pp. 1-21.

00021

Since your definition reflects your experience, it is difficult to stand back and raise the questions suggested on the previous page. To help you, we have reprinted in this section of the KIT a number of definitions by a number of people who are engaged in the scholarly study of religion. Each one also teaches about religion and is interested in study of religion in public education.

1. David E. Engle, University of Pittsburgh
2. Nicholas Piediscalzi, Wright State University
3. Michael Novak, The Rockefeller Foundation
4. Harvey Cox, Harvard University
5. Clifford Geertz, Princeton University
6. Frederick J. Streng, Charles L. Lloyd, Jr., and Jay T. Allen, Southern Methodist University.

The views of each will help you gain perspective on your personal definition of religion. As you read each statement, keep your definition in mind. Raise the questions printed on the previous page, and change your definition as you go along, if that seems reasonable.

1. David E. Engle*

a. What different ways is "religion" used?
b. What is the definition Engle recommends in education?
c. State this recommended definition and what it would include for classroom teaching.

*Quoted from David E. Engle, University of Pittsburgh, keynote address at the Defiance (Ohio) College Resource-ium on Religion and Our Schools, February 27-28, 1969.

2. Nicholas Piediscalzi*

a. Unlike Engle, Piediscalzi sees two definitions of "religion" useful in guiding classroom teaching. State the two definitions --one narrow, the other broad.
b. Compare the broad definition with Engle's recommended definition.
c. What reasons does Piediscalzi offer for preferring the broad definition? How do these compare with Engle's preference?

*From a statement distributed by The Public Education Religion Studies Center, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio. Professor Piediscalzi is Co-Director of PERSC.

00023

3. Michael Novak*

a. With Engle and Piediscalzi, Michael Novak seems to prefer a broad definition of "religion." What are the basic "religious questions" which Novak presents?
b. What are the three meanings of the term "religious" which Novak offers? Which does he prefer and why?
c. How does Novak's use of the terms "story" and "ultimate" compare with Engle and Piediscalzi's broad definitions of "religion?"

*Michael Novak, Ascent of the Mountain, Flight of the Dove (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), pp. 1-3, 46-47.

00024

4. Harvey Cox*

a. What does Cox mean by "story" and "signal?"

b. How does Cox's use of "story" compare with Novak's use of that term?

*Harvey Cox, The Seduction of the Spirit: The Use and Misuse of People's Religion, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973), pp. 9-11, 12, 14.

00025

Clifford Geertz*

a. What does he mean by the terms "world-view" and "ethos?" What do these terms have to do with "religion?"

b. How would you link Geertz's concern for meaning ("world-view") and commitment ("ethos") to Engle, Piediscalzi, and Novak's broad definition of religion? To Cox's and Novak's concern for telling one's story?

c. Explain in your own terms how meaning and commitment are stored in symbols?

*Quoted from Clifford Geertz, "Ethos, World-View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols," The Antioch Review, Volume (19), 421-424.

00026

6. Frederick J. Streng, Charles L. Lloyd, and Jay T. Allen*

Once more go back to the questions in the introduction to this Section. Review your responses as you read into the following discussion of those questions by Frederick Streng and his associates. This provides an opportunity for you to "put it all together" and refine your definition.

00027

*Quoted from Streng, Lloyd, and Allen, op.cit., pp. 2-4.

After you have considered your definition of "religion," listen to the last part of Side A, Cassette #1 which accompanies this booklet. Several teachers are raising questions about the definition of "religion" and Professor Robert A. Spivey is helping them discover some answers.

C. THE PROBLEM OF "OBJECTIVITY"

One of the key words in the Supreme Court decision affecting the role of religion in public schools is "objectivity." Unfortunately, there are problems with the word. What is objectivity? The Court never defines the word. Is objectivity simply accurate description? Is it dealing only with the facts? Is it interpretation--free reporting?

Teachers often help students become aware of the distinction between statements of fact and statements of opinion. For example, in the following list one might put an "O" before statements of opinion and an "F" before statements of fact (whether true of false):

__1. The Republican Party has done more for the country than the Democratic Party.
__2. Buddhism has Four Noble Truths.
__3. Jesus died on the cross.
__4. The Supreme Court decisions affecting religion in public schools banned Bible reading.
__5. The study of Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism is more important than the study of other religions.
__6. Many children leave the school system at the end of twelve years without any formal study of religion.
__7. Christmas is becoming more of a secular holiday than a religious event.
__8. Communism should not be studied as a religion.
__9. Teachers ought not pass judgment on the religious truth of Taoist teachings.
__10. Mecca is a Holy City in Islam.

Such exercises in separating fact from opinion are usual classroom activities in social studies. But does objectivity mean that teaching about religion involves only the rote mastery of dry barebones? Is fact all that there is?

The following conversation, a transcript of part of an informal discussion, took place during the national meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Atlanta, October 1971. The participants are Robert A. Spivey, Robert Michaelsen, and Edwin Scott Gaustad. Dr. Spivey is Professor of Religion at The Florida State University and co-author of The Anatomy of the New Testament. Dr. Michaelsen is professor of religious studies at The University of California, Santa Barbara, and author of Piety in the Public School. Dr. Gaustad is professor and chairman of history at The University of California, Riverside, and author of A Religious History of America. These scholars have been actively working with educators on the problems associated with religion in the public schools, especially concerning appropriate teaching strategies and suitable materials.

A recording of this conversation may be found on Side B, Cassette #1, which accompanies this booklet. Play this tape and read along. Following the discussion, Professor Michaelsen provides some additional insights on what he calls a "critical-appreciative study of religion."

SPIVEY: In relation to the study of religion in public schools the Supreme Court decisions indicated that objectivity should be the criterion as to whether such study could be admitted into the public schools. Bob, do you think objectivity is really desirable, or even that it is possible to be objective in teaching about religion?

MICHAELSEN: I think objectivity is a good legal definition of what is meant by the First Amendment; moreover, it has a certain amount of educational value. I personally--educationally--would prefer such designations as critical--appreciative, which implies not quite as strict a stance as objectivity seems to imply. I think that a strict stance--sort of standing outside the subject and divesting oneself of all convictions--is impossible for any one to do entirely.

SPIVEY: Thus, you would say that, although it is impossible to be completely objective, it is something toward which the teacher strives. Maybe objectivity, divesting oneself of all convictions, is implied in your notion of being critical in the study of religion. But the other dimension, that objectivity does not connote, is the educational need for appreciative study, a more empathetic treatment of religion. Some people, particularly religious people, fear that the study of religion will be only objective and critical and will cause students to become less religious. Of course, that trend would go against the Supreme Court's decisions calling for neutrality of the public schools in regard to religion. Do you have any comment about this Ed--the question of objectivity?

GAUSTAD: Well, of course, I'm sure we use that word partly in the search for something that says we're not interested in indoctrination and not wishing to support it at all. I think there is some legitimate concern that looking at a religion in a way different from that in which the adherents looks at it creates some uneasiness or some restlessness. But if we are committed to the

notion that education--all else being equal--is a little bit better than ignorance, it seems to me that it is better in this area too. And I think there are ways that the dangers of reductionism* can be avoided. The use of Bob's word appreciative seems to me to be one of the very good ways of avoiding reducing religion to something that is less attractive, less meaningful, has less integrity for either an individual or for a society.

MICHAELSEN: Bob, I think the Court used another word that I would like to cite here; that is the preposition about, teaching about religion. It seems to me that what one is concerned with is the study about the subject, learning as much as he can about the truth, the facts relative to the subject, shall we say. While I don't think it's the obligation or the responsibility of the teacher to try to indicate what is true religiously--see what I mean, see the distinction I'm trying to make here; that is, if the teacher attempts to indicate what is true religiously--that God is, that God is not, let's say--that's getting beyond the bounds of his job.

SPIVEY: Yes; the teacher and student study what is true for this particular religious group...

MICHAELSEN: Right.

SPIVEY: Or for this person who has religious convictions...

MICHAELSEN: Right.

SPIVEY: But not necessarily the truth.

MICHAELSEN: Right.

SPIVEY: Another related question is suggested by some people who say that the public school, because of emphasis upon reason, empirical facts, and evidence in logical argumentation, is inherently opposed to religious truth, because religious truth is basically supernatural, non-rational, and emotional and is thus not subject simply to rational study. What would either of you say to this contention that the study of religion means that religion is false when the rationalistic criteria of secular, public education are applied?

GAUSTAD: Well, I hope we have gotten over that pseudo-scientific hang-up of a decade or two or three ago. I do think that the public schools at one stage felt that empirical, demonstrable, publicly verifiable fact was the only thing that they had to deal with, but it seems to me that most educators not only are unwilling to defend that these days, but they go the other way to say that

*Reductionism: To reduce complex human behavior to objective statements of observable "fact." To provide an objective interpretation that tends to reduce or to explain away the miraculous or sacred aspects of religious behavior.

concerns about value questions in education are necessary and that public schools must deal with such issues. It seems to me that dealing with religion is in that area, and legitimately so.

MICHAELSEN: The analogy is certainly not a complete one by any means, but cite the arts--music, painting, and so on. The public school, obviously, is not concerned only to teach the facts about the arts, so to speak, or to do a strictly scientific analysis. But they attempt to develop some appreciation of what's going on here--which is more than a strictly scientific, cold, rational analysis.

SPIVEY: Would your statement mean that in the public schools as long as the purpose is educational, you might have something like religious experience or religious worship, or ritual? Would that be part of such study? We obviously have music in the public schools; students actually do music; they don't just study about music.

MICHAELSEN: I would be hesitant about actually conducting religious worship in the schools, but I would certainly not be the least hesitant about illustrative practices, that is, films, visiting places of worship, and that sort of thing, I think that would be an important element in teaching about the subject.

GAUSTAD: Well, I would support that too. I think that the religious experience itself is something that has a character of privacy and inviolability about it that the classroom ought to respect. While one might study about psychoanalysis, I would also be very reluctant to see psychoanalysis take place in the classroom--though I'm sure it does!

SPIVEY: Particularly of the teacher...

GAUSTAD: True! Can I ask you a question, Bob, because I know this is something that you have thought about and talked about some. You have indicated a preference for the phrase "learning about religion" as opposed to the one "teaching about religion"--and I wonder if you would say why you find that a little more to be desired.

SPIVEY: Well, I think that part of this preference has to do with fundamental theory of education--that is, people basically learn that which they sort of teach themselves. It's not enough for the teacher to impart information to the student; the student remembers for a very short while, then forgets. But if religion is going to be studied, and if religion is going to be learned about fully, it seems that it's highly desirable that there be activity on the part of the student as well as activity on the part of the teacher. I think that the phrase learning about rather than teaching about communicates the kind of classroom activity I would prefer to emphasize. Teaching is something the teacher does, while learning is something the student does.

GAUSTAD: O.K., given that, while I tend to agree, let's go back to your question about objectivity. Is that really a terribly pressing problem if you think of the tasks as one of learning rather than one of teaching?

SPIVEY: You are right, Ed, but I think that both of us would admit that "learning about" is more a phrase than an actuality. Obviously, a teacher is going to be doing a lot of teaching--he will rarely get away completely from that role. But learning is a kind of ideal, just as the term objectivity is an ideal. Let me just mention one other point. Bob, I remember your making a speech in which you said that study of religion, especially at the higher level, has sometimes been guilty of offering to the student a stone when what he wants is bread. I've been thinking about that phraseology, and I wanted to try this slight change out on you. Wouldn't it be true that we should aim for offering the students bread, and also more than bread? For bread is a mundane, factual, everyday thing. It seems to me that religion has that dimension of the everyday plus something more. So we want to offer students a little bit more.

MICHAELSEN: Well, I agree. Bread is not enough. Man does not live by bread alone.

GAUSTAD: Another one of your famous sayings!

MICHAELSEN: All right. Maybe I could use another scriptural analogy here. There's always the problem of reversing the miracle of Cana (John 2:1-11) in treating the subject of religion. It's a constant problem especially so perhaps with the so-called objective or descriptive approach. That I had in mind, in part, by the problem of turning the wine into water. That is, religion is a living subject, and there's a tremendous challenge to teaching a living subject, and keeping it alive for the learner, or to learning a living subject, to use your preference. But what I had in mind in that reference in the speech you mentioned--where teachers are giving students stones when they're seeking bread--is that students are seeking a great deal more than teachers are capable of giving. Teachers might be able to set the stage perhaps, to help the students along....

SPIVEY: And, of course, this gets us back to that distinction between teaching and learning. Students have got to be able, in some sense, to work it out for themselves. The teacher cannot and should not attempt to hand out the truth.

The three scholars in the dialogue also looked disparagingly at the bone dry factual approach to religion study. Simply presenting facts about religions is as distorting as presenting judgments born of one's biases and prejudice. The scholars used the tern critical-appreciative as a better notion of what the "objective" study of religion ought to be. That is, an objective study of religion must go beyond sheer, stark facts to the meaning of the religious tradition for its adherent. The student is critical in discerning the facts of what is going on, say, when an Indian lays out his typee in a circle, and is appreciative when ascertaining what the circle, as symbol, means for that Indian and his relationship with others and with the cosmos. This critical-appreciative view of objectivity is directed to facts (awareness of what's going on) but also to the meaning of those facts for the believer and the religious tradition.

Take a minute to re-read the piece by Clifford Geertz on page 23 where he quotes the material on the circle in the Sioux's world-view. This is "critical-appreciative objectivity."

Consider these views on "objectivity" by someone who has studied the problem of teaching about religion in public schools for over a decade:*

> The public schools can approach the inclusion of explicit religious content in the curriculum in a variety of ways or on different levels of depth. The first approach, and certainly the most elementary and perhaps the least controversial, is the factual or informational level. For example, in studying the Bible as literature, the materials would

*J. Blaine Fister's "Teaching Religion in the Public Schools," The Living Light. Fall, 1969, pp. 26-27.

have to stand on their own, without interpretation. Religious knowledge or information about biblical personalities or stories would be studied with an attempt to increase "religious literacy." There are courses being taught this way, at the factual level only. These enable the student when encountering a reference in secular literature to a biblical personality or event to be familiar with it, having studied its primary source. The Supreme Court recommended that the Bible be studied for its "literacy and historic qualities." Advocates of the strictly factual or informational approach would prefer to let the material stand on its own merit without interpretation.

Good education, however, involves the search beyond the facts for meaning. When we get into the interpretation of content, however, especially where it is religious, we move to a more sophisticated process requiring greater sensitivity and skill in teaching. More is demanded on the part of teacher and student alike. Professor Philip H. Phenix of Teachers College, Columbia University, who has offered numerous courses to prospective public school teachers on the "Objective Teaching of Religion in the Schools," emphasized the importance of interpretation. He rejects the idea that religious materials should be studied only at the factual level, considering this an empty exercise. "As soon as one is concerned with the import of what is read, interpretation is required. The only point in reading the Bible or in studying any other religious entity, is to understand what it means, and this is the goal of interpretation." The test of objectivity in such teaching, according to Phenix, is the acknowledgment of possible alternative patterns of interpretation. He goes on to warn that teaching is not objective when any interpretation is presented as though it were absolute and unquestioned fact and as though no alternative interpretations were possible or admissible. Studying any topic without exploring a variety of approaches and points of view related to the issues involved would be a lifeless and dull educational venture. Exploring alternatives is not an easy way of teaching, but it is obviously a rewarding one. When we come to religious data, interpretations are manifold, certainly, and points of view are strongly held. But if we were required to exclude from study in the public schools all subject matter involving strongly held convictions and deep emotional commitments, we would need to exclude not only religion, but politics, economics, and countless social and civic issues as well. Critical judgment would not be cultivated, and education in a real sense would go out the window. In any area, then, free and open inquiry is central to the public education experience; we might even say, to all good educational experiences.

Still further, beyond the process of examining various alternative

interpretations and points of view, comes the internalization of meaning for the student himself. Where does he stand? Does he have a response, perhaps even a commitment, freely chosen? Education that is concerned with what is ultimately meaningful necessarily takes on a religious dimension. Meaning is explored, not in the abstract, but for the student himself. Students are invited to integrate new learnings into their own life stances, with what counts most to them.

A letter sent by a social studies textbook company to school principals stated:

> But five questions remain to be answered by each of us. Despite all our gains in learnings and our progress in science, each of us sooner or later faces life's five important issues. And this is the task of our schools, to help each of us ask ourselves, and then to find the answers: (1) Who am I? (2) Whence did I come? (3) Where am I bound? (4) Why am I here? (5) What is the good life for me?

These questions were raised by a secular textbook company. They are questions each person must eventually face. They are genuinely religious questions. Answers to these questions might come from a variety of sources, but certainly the major religions of the world have addressed themselves to finding answers. These questions are quite appropriate for exploration in the public schools. While answers can come from many sources, certainly those that have come from religious sources must be represented in the search.

Fister's comments about Biblical interpretation are not especially germane to elementary school instruction as few would imagine leading courses in the "Bible as Literature," or using Biblical material which was complex and called for scholarly interpretation. However, Fister and the scholar he quotes (Philip Phenix) agree that a factual approach is an educational disaster; it is not imposed by the Court's use of "objectivity." The students may, with their teachers, critically ascertain the facts in a situation and appreciatively seek the meaning of those facts for the believer.

Fister also notes that the search for meaning is not simply confined to what this experience, this symbol, this literature, this celebration, etc., means for these adherents. The students also "are invited to integrate new learnings into their own life stances, with what matters most to them." That is, neither the teacher nor the materials are setting forth religious truth for student acceptance and internalization--although education which is meaningful does indeed increase students' self-awareness and does cause reflection upon one's own beliefs and feelings. This phenomenon is not peculiar to teaching about religion, for it is a feature of any worthwhile educational venture. And, as Fister pointed out, such educational ventures are now present in the

schools and yet they tend to ignore the spectrum of religious alternatives.*

Put simply, Fister is arguing that objectivity is not facts alone, but is critical-appreciative (facts and meaning). He is arguing that all worthwhile education causes self-reflection and that students will (and ought to) reflect upon what these alternative religious meanings mean to them--not to accept and become "believers"--but as reflective counterpoints to their own lifestyle and world-views.

The following passage is a helpful guide to summarizing where we are to this point in the KIT. Read it over and argue with each item. Do you agree? Would you state the point differently?**

"Religion should be discussed with sensitivity. Conflicting points of view are to be expected and considered; open discussion is a proper method for truth searching in study about religion; religious indoctrination is to be avoided.*

a. Need for factual accuracy. The need for factual accuracy is paramount in teaching about religion. Careful and balanced examination of source is requisite for informed judgment. As much as possible, teachers should use primary sources and should encourage students to use them. Secondary sources are useful for overview and clarification. Students should be helped to identify, compare, assess, and communicate ideas and viewpoints. Teachers should be thorough in studying the sources and related materials; they should also recognize and admit their limited knowledge or understanding in a specific area.

b. Need for empathy. Teachers should also seek to understand the points of view of different religions. They should empathize sufficiently with the view of an adherent of a particular religion to grasp the significance of that view for the one who holds it. This empathy helps one to understand why the view is held and why it is valuable in the life of the one who holds it. One must first seek to come to an understanding of a religion within its own historical context rather than solely from one's own viewpoint.

*This criticism is the point of those who see the absence of "religion" in the schools as violation of the neutrality the Establishment clause of the Constitution demands, for in effect it establishes "secularism."

*Handbook on the Legal Rights and Responsibilities of School Personnel and Students in the Areas of Moral and Civic Education and Teaching About Religion. Moral Guidelines Implementation Committee, California State Board of Education, 1973.

c. Problem of oversimplification. In teaching about religion, one must avoid the tendency to convey a false impression of the subject by oversimplifying it. Teachers should explain the extent to which a particular religion or religious view is to be considered in class. Students should be made fully aware of the limitations imposed on their study about and, consequently, their understanding of religion. Further, the diversity within religions as well as among religions should receive careful attention. In addition, the teacher should state why certain sources, selections, historical periods, themes, and issues have been selected for study.

d. Need for sensitivity. In teaching about religion, the teacher should be sensitive to the diverse views, levels of sophistication, and critical ability of students, parents, and members of the community. School administrators and teachers should be sensitive to the possible problems involved such as misunderstandings and misconceptions.

e. Avoidance of ridicule and prejudice. Ridicule and prejudiced statements must be avoided in the study of religion and religious practices whether from a historical or contemporary viewpoint. Ridicule is rooted in an anti-educational attitude; it is the product of failing to be sensitive or empathic. It results from a callous disregard for the views of another person or group."

D. WHY TEACH ABOUT RELIGION IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAM?

This question in the title focuses the concern of this closing section in KIT #1. Thus far, this KIT has demonstrated that teaching about religion is constitutional and that religion has a narrow and a broad definition. However, we have not yet weighed the appropriateness of learning about religion in the elementary school classroom--grades K through 6.

Before considering this "appropriateness," try your responses to the following assertions:

	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
1. I can teach social studies without mentioning religion. Why, my students in third grade don't know that I'm a Presbyterian.			
2. As educators we cannot teach for commitment to a particular religious tradition, but learning about religion will make students more religious.			
3. As we teach about religion in schools, students will be getting a moral education; that is, they will be learning values for life and living.			
4. Religion ought to be a separate subject in the elementary school program.			
5. We cannot teach about religion in elementary school. The Bible is so complicated that the primary grade children will not understand.			
6. Religious training is a responsibility of the home and church. We should not teach about religion in school.			
7. The government--and the public schools--must be neutral on matters of religion. Thus, if we just omit religion from courses and texts, we're home free. The principle of neutrality is observed!			
8. I can easily teach elementary school social studies without mentioning religion. Since I don't mention religion and since I don't let the children talk about it in class, my classes are religion-free. We're neutral at Central Elementary!			
9. Look! Third graders are just too young for comparative religion classes.			
10. Ok. I understand what you're saying, but kids in elementary school just aren't interested in religion!			

00039

Well, if you disagreed with all or most of these comments on the previous page, the RESS staff agrees with you.

If you were undecided or if you agreed with the comments, let us argue with you. Perhaps we have not been too clear or something has gone awry in our presentation. We ought to clear this up and to see if we can get agreement on some constitutional questions, some assumptions about elementary school students, and some conceptions of learning about religions in public school.

COMMENT 1: Here a teacher thinks he (or she) can teach about society without dealing with religion and without revealing what he stands for as a human being. While one might argue that a teacher cannot be an adequate adult model for students if he feels he must hide his commitment and stand before students as uncommitted, this does not mean that the teacher as a model is to be emulated and his commitments accepted by the students, but rather that the teacher as a fully human person ought to be that to all persons, including students. What's wrong with students knowing that you are a Presbyterian, a Jew, a Roman Catholic, etc? ... if you are not asking them to accept or celebrate your commitments, but to understand a variety of religious traditions?

Another point is brought forth by Raymond English, Director of the Educational Research Council of America:

> "To study human behavior and human societies without paying attention to religious motivations is like studying chemistry without recognizing the presence of oxygen in the atmosphere.... Our impression is that the experiment in serious religious study in the elementary school is well worth pursuing. It will form an excellent foundation for more sophisticated study and discussion in the secondary school. It will also, we hope, help youngsters to be tolerant and understanding towards religious differences both in the United States and in the whole world."

Teaching about religion is inevitable and implicit in the scope of the school's responsibility to treat human culture and behavior. An adequate study of any culture and most human behavior simply is not complete or academically responsible without attending to commitments, meanings, and other features of religion--especially in the broad definition of religion.

If someone asserts that he <u>can</u> teach social studies without mentioning religion, another may respond "Indeed! But what kind of social studies is it?" Is it significant? Relevant? Academically sound? Does it distort? The list of questions is endless, but the point is clear: An adequate treatment of most facets of human experience requires study of a religious dimension. And as Engle pointed out earlier (see page 16)to ignore religion is to offer an incomplete education and/or to establish secularism as a norm in coping with human affairs...be it in first grade or a graduate school seminar.

COMMENT 2: Here a person asserts that, even with the Constitutional limitations, teaching about religion will make students more religious. This statement may be attacked on empirical grounds--for there is simply no evidence to support such a conclusion. However, a more important objection is that teaching about religion in the public schools can no more be directed toward promoting religious fervor in general, than it can be directed toward achieving specific religious commitment. The goal is inappropriate to the public school. The constitutional principle of neutrality demands that the state (and public schools are part of the "state") refrain from entry into matters of religious conviction. One may teach about religion only for understanding.

Also important are the arguments heard from minority communities that such instruction, if intended to promote "religious behavior in general," is an opening wedge to get specific religious practices (i. e., "Christian") back into the schools. Such conceptions of teaching about religion appear as the camel's head in the tent. Thus, such assertions are not only incorrect given the facts and inappropriate given the constitution, but are disfunctional as they raise old hurts and fears among minorities in our society.

COMMENT 3: Here a person links teaching about religion with moral development. Any instruction worth its salt in a student's social education will help that student learn more about himself and his values. However, too much is made of the direct linkage between teaching about religion and learning "proper values." The public schools are not engaged in religious education, but in understanding religions. Knowledge about religions is not accepting specific religious values. Learning about religions may broaden a students' perspective. It may create self-awareness and reflection. But the teacher is not teaching for commitment to religious values or any specific values in an inquiry-oriented, public educational setting. Education, after all, means in its Latin root "to bring forth." In this case, it means to bring forth alternative commitments and world-views for understanding and reflection. not judgment or commitment.

Commitment to values, like commitment to religious beliefs, is a matter for the student with his parents and community of fellows. The public school is concerned with understanding and with reflective-inquiry skill development. Teaching about religion leaves commitment to the student, and deals only with understanding and skill development, as do other areas of the elementary school curriculum.

COMMENT 4: Here a person asserts that religion ought to be a separate subject. As teachers well know, special interest groups have always tried to capture a piece of the action in schools. The schools have a ready audience. As a new problem or concern arises, there seems to be pressure to add something to the curriculum. Too often advocates of teaching religion argue that such instruction may correct the drug problem, juvenile delinquency, alienation, etc. We might smile at such reasoning but the essential point is that such goals are not the immediate concern of teaching about religion (and there is no evidence that such outcomes are possible). Moreover, the school curriculum simply doesn't have room for additional courses, given the current responsibilities of school teachers.

In addition, the minority communities are concerned about claims for separate courses. They argue convincingly that religion ought to be studied where appropriate to the existing, regular program of instruction in a school. The RESS program is designed for the regular social studies program and deals with concerns intrinsic to topics now studied as part of a student's social education.

COMMENT 5: Someone has asserted that we can't teach about religion because the Bible is so complicated. Too often persons talking about teaching about religions really mean Bible study. That is one error. Study about religion is not limited to Bible study; it includes many religious traditions and materials broader than sacred texts. Obviously many religious concepts and concerns are far too complex for elementary school students. There is no argument with that. Also, many religious issues and concerns are simply too dull and meaningless for elementary school students. What is exciting and interesting, and what is meaningful and relevant may be studied in a manner appropriate to the students involved. Otherwise, one is in the position of saying that teachers should not deal with music because students cannot comprehend the complexity of sound waves, or gravity because students do not understand abstract, mathematical computer models, or environmental deterioration because students do not "fully" understand chemistry, biological science, and political science. Our argument is that teachers ought to teach what can be understood and can be meaningful to the students involved. In religions there are many such concerns and concepts--as KIT II will amply illustrate!

COMMENT 6: Here someone asserts that religious training is a function of the religious community and the parents. We couldn't agree more, but that does not mean that students ought not study about religion in school. Religious training--learning and commiting one's self to a specific religious tradition--is indeed a home and community matter. But teaching about religions is not "religious training." By

constitutional limitation and professional propriety, educators are not religious educators. However, teaching <u>about</u> religion is for understanding in the same way that study about government, economic systems, families, cultures, etc. is for understanding. Out in the "real world" students encounter something called religion, something called religious beliefs, behavior, events, and institutions. They ought to be able to understand these phenomena as educated persons, just as the educated person ought to understand politics, economics, family relations, etc.

COMMENT 7: Someone asserts that to ignore religion is to be neutral. To be neutral is to bring forth alternatives for students' understanding and reflection. Neutrality does not omit those beliefs, practices, values, and lifestyles which one labels "religion." This approach simply establishes "secularism" as the norm.

COMMENT 8: The same point is raised and the same rebuttal applies. Being neutral is not stepping back or closing one's eyes (and the eyes of all the students). If broadly defined, religion is present in all classrooms. We express and live our ultimate concerns--be they hedonistic delight, accumulating material possessions, seeking the greatest happiness for the greatest number, establishing justice, expressing love, etc. When we study other subjects, in the curriculum our commitments and concerns are involved and the commitments and concerns of others are involved. Why try to omit something we label "religious commitments and concerns" when such an attempt serves only to distort? Just how can one study a community, a family, the Bedouin, the nation Israel, etc., without engaging in the study of religion? Religion is already in the curriculum of all elementary school social studies programs, it is now a matter of dealing with religion study systematically and openly, with emphasis upon concepts, meaning, and sensitivities.

COMMENT 9: Here a person used the term "comparative religion" and judged students too young for such comparison. While the Supreme Court employed the term, in a narrow sense it is archaic and dysfunctional. Too often comparative study becomes a judgmental study. Obviously, the Court and the schools do not want to promote evaluations of others' religious traditions! The RESS staff argues for a study about religion which emphasizes factual information and an appreciation of the believer's understanding. That is, the study of religion is not designed to pass judgment or to compare religions, but to appreciate the meaning others find in life and how they act out that meaning and celebrate it.

COMMENT 10: Here someone questions the interest level of religions for students. When properly presented, it is our experience that students display a drive to be competent in understanding religion; there is a natural curiosity and an interest in understanding the religious dimension of human behavior and culture. Problems involving student interest, if any arise, are not with "learning about religion" but in developing appropriate materials and proper strategies for teaching. The failure is not with the student but with his adult colleagues in the task of learning.

AN ARGUMENT FOR RELIGION-STUDY

The religious dimension, or religion in its varied secular and non-secular manifestations, has to do with world-view, a sense of reality from which a person and/or a community makes sense of life. This perspective is reflected in life-style, the way in which a person or a community moves, acts, and lives. Religious experience is a significant dimension of life in all human societies.

The undeniable educational necessity for study about religion in public education is recognized at the level of higher education. Moreover, a number of efforts have been made at the secondary level. What is often overlooked, however, is the impoverishment of elementary level education which ignores the study of religion. This omission was recognized in a 1972 report on the treatment of minorities in elementary social studies textbooks. Among the criteria used by the committee of seven educators were the following:

> "Is the role of a variety of religious groups in our society, both past and present, included?"
>
> "Is the legitimacy of a variety of life styles acknowledged?"
>
> "In dealing with various matters, do the authors commit 'sins of omission'?"
>
> "Would the book tend to encourage a positive self-image?"*

The RESS Project affirms that the study of religion is the proper and necessary responsibility of the schools, even at the early elementary level, and that its incorporation into the elementary program provides a more holistic approach to social studies education.

The child should receive a "complete" education from his earliest entry into school. Learning about significant areas of our society cannot be magically suspended until higher grade levels. The failure to provide correct information and guided sensitizing experiences in the area of religion may result in the early formation of stereotypes, misconceptions, distrust, and prejudice. The RESS program in learning about religion is non-denominational, non-proselytizing, and academic. The program develops a broad conceptual framework, empathetic attitudes, and analytic skills at each child's level of development for investigating varied world views, life styles, and traditions.

*Michigan Department of Education, Early Elementary Social Studies: A Report in Regards to Their Treatment of Minorities. Lansing, Michigan: Michigan Department of Education, 1972.

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The RESS program draws upon established research* in determining content and methodology appropriate to the child's level of cognitive and moral development. At the elementary level, study about religion contributes to the development of self-concept as the child affirms his own or his family's world view and life style, whether it is secular or non-secular. At the same time, learning about religion in the elementary school fosters attitudes of empathy and appreciation that are vital to the working out of equitable mutual accommodations in our multi-religious society.

In this way religion in public education supports a primary goal of elementary social studies--educating children to become thinking-feeling citizens whose judgments will be based on factual analysis and sound reasoning, tempered with empathy and compassion.

*Jerome Bruner, The Process of Education. New York: Random House, Inc., 1960.
Ronald Goldman, Readiness For Religion, A Basis for Developmental Religious Education. New York: Seabury Press, 1965, 1968.
Jean Piaget, The Child's Conception of the World. Totowa, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1969.
Jean Piaget, The Moral Judgment of the Child. New York: The Free Press, 1965.

Reasoning Together

Given the information in this KIT and your responses as you studied, we want to provide this opportunity for you to take a stand. IS LEARNING ABOUT RELIGION AN APPROPRIATE ACTIVITY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAMS?

1. Take a stand on the question. Write down your position and state some reasons to support it.

2. List at least four questions which may arise in your community or school if you did teach about religion. Briefly note how you would respond to the questions (from parents, religious leaders, taxpayers, etc.).

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APPENDIX

Bibliography on Learning about Religion in Public Schools

American Association of School Administrators. Religion in the Public Schools. New York: Harper & Row, 1964. 68 pp. Paperback.

This report by the Commission on Religion in the Public Schools of the AASA is one of the finest brief treatments of the subject available. The first two chapters treat the historic and legal aspects; the third chapter sets up a philosophical framework for public schools on how to deal with religion; the last two chapters make concrete suggestions in regard to curriculum and to extracurricular activities.

Boles, Donald E. The Bible, Religion, and the Public Schools. New York: Crowell-Collier, 1962. 320 pp. Paperback.

Boles, in this widely reviewed and quoted book, gives a detailed treatment of over 60 court cases dealing with religion and the public schools. Although Boles wrote this book before the Abington case, his presentation is in keeping with the recent Supreme Court cases. An excellent analysis of both sides of the devotional Bible reading issue is a major concern of this book. The reading is interesting and free from technical jargon.

Boles, Donald E. The Two Swords: Commentaries and Cases in Religion and Education. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1967. 407 pp.

This book is a companion volume to The Bible, Religion and the Public Schools. Boles presents a series of the most pertinent United States Supreme Court and state court cases involving the church-state-school issues. Each case is written in a way that allows the reader to determine his own position. Skillful summaries conclude each chapter.

Brown, Nicholas C., editor. The Study of Religion in the Public Schools. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1958. 229 pp. Paperback.

This conference report from the American Council on Education contains major discussions and papers dealing with the problem of the proper relationship between education and religion. American history is considered in detail.

Clayton, A. Stafford. Religion and Schooling: A Comparative Study. Waltham, Mass.: Blaisdell Publishing Co., 1969. 247 pp. Paperback.

Clayton's book is a valuable source for certain European responses to the relationships between organized religion and public education. The author draws on primary sources and firsthand observations to present a helpful description of the political, social, and educational consequences of modern church-school policies in England, the Netherlands, and Sweden, and relates them to the current situation in the United States. His conclusions suggest that European policies are not designed to meet the needs of contemporary American society.

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Cox, Claire R. The Fourth R: What Can Be Taught About Religion in the Public Schools. New York: Hawthorne Books, 1969. 179 pp.

This is a highly readable, journalistic account of different aspects of learning about religion in the public schools. As the title suggests, the major emphasis is on various efforts across the country to introduce religion through the school curriculum.

Duker, Sam. The Public Schools and Religion: The Legal Context. New York: Harper & Row, 1966. 238 pp. Paperback.

This book is a commendable effort to make the key court decisions understandable to the average layman. Excerpts from the cases, brief commentaries, and a table appear.

Freund, Paul A., and Robert Ulich. Religion and the Public Schools. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965. 54 pp.

Both of these discussions were originally given as lectures. Ulich handles the educational aspects; Freund discusses the legal issues.

Gaustad, Edwin S. American Religious History. Washington, D.C.: Service Center for Teachers of History, American Historical Association. 27 pp.

This excellent pamphlet is designed especially for high school teachers, surveying the literable available in the field.

Jacobson, Philip. Religion in Public Education. New York: American Jewish Committee, 1969. 44 pp. Paperback.

This is a brief, useful guide that attempts to bring in both sides of such issues as value education, prayer, released time, and teaching about religion. Jacobson's booklet is helpful as a discussion guide, for its purpose is to explore the main points at issue and to suggest practical solutions where possible.

Kliebard, H.M. Religion and Education in America: A Documentary History. Scranton, Pa.: International Textbook Co., 1969. 251 pp. Paperback.

Kliebard has edited an excellent volume of key sourse documents on the subject of religion and education. Part I presents the historical antecedents, and Part II consists of legal documents, including Abington v. Schempp and Engel v. Vitale.

Little, Lawrence C. Religion and Public Education: A Bibliography. Third Edition. Pittsburgh, Pa.: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968. 214 pp. Paperback.

This third edition of a popular bibliography contains six major sections: Books and Pamphlets, Publications of Religious Bodies and of Public School Systems, Doctoral Dissertations, Masters' and B.D. Theses, Periodicals, and Selected United States Supreme Court Cases.

Loder, James E. Religion and the Public Schools. New York: Association Press, 1965. 125 pp. Paperback.

Loder presents a succinct, constructive policy for the place of religion in public education, without minimizing difficulties.

Michaelsen, Robert S. Piety and the Public School. New York: Macmillan Co., 1970. 274 pp.

This volume is a thoroughly researched and carefully written account of the shifting relationships between religion and the public schools in America's history. Michaelsen draws upon selected materials relating to American religious history, the work and thought of major educational leaders, and significant court cases.

National Conference of Christians and Jews. Teaching About Religion in the Public Schools. New York: NCCJ, 1968. 83 pp. Paperback.

The NCCJ has published the proceedings of their Conference on Teaching About Religion in the Public Schools, held at Meriden, Conn., Nov. 1967. Study papers, keynote addresses, and workshop papers present informative, diverse, and provocative aspects of the issues. The report is intended to provide stimulation and guidance to local districts.

Panoch, James, and David Barr. Religion Goes to School. New York: Harper & Row, 1968. 183 pp.

This book is a resource for action to construct and initiate legal efforts for learning about religion in the public schools. Short answers to typical questions in layman's language form a major section of the book, and a large annotated bibliography and resource list of all types of materials and agencies are included. Representative examples of curriculum units and courses are briefly described. The authors direct the work of the Religious Instruction Association in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Politella, Joseph. Religion in Education: An Annotated Bibliography. Oneonta, N.Y.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1956. 90 pp. Paperback.

This excellent (though now somewhat dated) annotated bibliography was sponsored by the Teacher Education and Religion Project Committee of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Religious Education, Volume 64, No. 2 (March-April, 1969). New Haven, Conn.: The Religious Education Association. 160 pp. Paperback.

This valuable issue features a symposium on Religion in American Public Schools. A number of course offerings in the social studies, English, and humanities are described.

Sebaly, A.L. Teacher Education and Religion. Oneonta, N.Y.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1959. 292 pp.

This symposium, based on the studies by the Committee on Teacher Education and Religion commissioned by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, contains a discussion of where materials about religion are intrinsic to various disciplines important to prospective teachers' preparation.

Sizer, Theodore R., editor. Religion and Public Education. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1967. 359 pp. Paperback.

Sizer has edited the papers presented at the Conference on the Role of Religion in Public Education, held under the auspices of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the National Conference of Christians and Jews in Cambridge, in 1966. A valuable source for understanding the significant contemporary relationship of religion and schooling, it includes top experts from the fields of both religion and education.

Ulich, Robert. A History of Religious Education. New York: New York University Press, 1968. 302 pp.

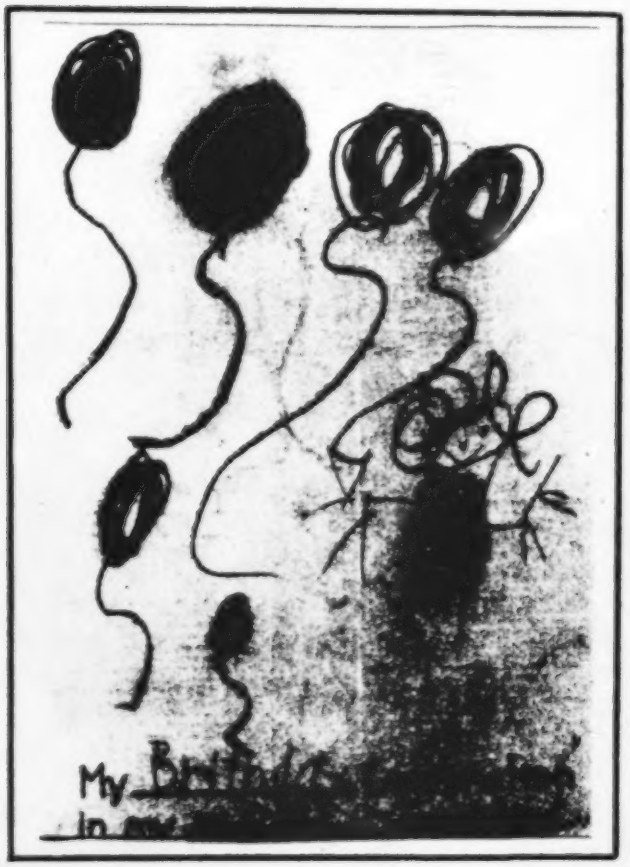
Ulich uses major documents -- many unknown even to theologians and scholars -- to provide a modern history of religious education in the Western world. This book is designed for parents as well as educators and theologians.

EVALUATION REPORT

RESS TEACHER SELF-INSTRUCTIONAL KIT I: WHAT IS RELIGION?

Compiled By

J. Susan Austin
Rodney F. Allen



RELIGION IN ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES PROJECT
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"One's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization . . . . Nothing we have said here indicates that such study . . . , when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistent with the First Amendment."

from the majority opinion of the United States Supreme Court, 1963, Schempp Case

The religious dimension, or religion in its varied secular and non-secular manifestations, has to do with world view, a sense of reality from which a person and/or a community makes sense of life. This perspective is reflected in life style, the way in which a person or a community moves, acts, and lives. Religious experience is a significant dimension of life in all human societies.

The undeniable educational necessity for study about religion in public education is recognized at the level of higher education. Moreover, a number of efforts have been made at the secondary level. What is often overlooked, however, is the impoverishment of elementary level education which ignores the study of religion. This omission was recognized in a 1972 report on the treatment of minorities in elementary social studies textbooks. Among the criteria used by the committee of seven educators were the following:

"Is the role of a variety of religious groups in our society, both past and present, included?"

"Is the legitimacy of a variety of life styles acknowledged?"

"In dealing with various matters, do the authors commit 'sins of omission'?"

"Would the book tend to encourage a positive self-image?"*

The rationale for the Religion in Elementary Social Studies Project affirms that the study of religion is the proper and necessary responsibility of the schools, even at the early elementary level, and that its incorporation into the elementary program provides a more holistic approach to social studies education.

The child should receive a "complete" education from his earliest entry into school. Learning about significant areas of our society cannot be magically suspended until higher grade levels. The failure to provide

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*Early Elementary Social Studies: A Report in Regards to Their Treatment of Minorities (Lansing, Michigan: Michigan Department of Education, 1972).

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correct information and guided sensitizing experiences in the area of religion may result in the early formation of stereotypes, misconceptions, distrust, and prejudice. The RESS program in learning about religion is non-denominational, non-proselytizing, and academically responsible. The program develops a broad conceptual framework, empathetic attitudes, and analytic skills at each child's level of development for investigating varied world views, life styles, and traditions.

The RESS program draws upon established research in determining content and methodology appropriate to the child's level of cognitive and moral development. At the elementary level, study about religion contributes to the development of self-concept as the child affirms his own or his family's world view and life style, whether it is secular or non-secular. At the same time, learning about religion in the elementary school fosters attitudes of empathy and appreciation that are vital to the working out of equitable mutual accommodations in our multi-religious society.

In this way religion in public education supports a primary goal of elementary social studies -- educating children to become thinking-feeling citizens whose judgments will be based on factual analysis and sound reasoning, tempered with empathy and compassion.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES FOR STUDENTS

The purpose of the RESS Project's student materials in its six levels is to develop the following main ideas, main concepts, sensitivities, and reflective inquiry skills:

A. Main Ideas

1. The religious dimension has to do with worldview and lifestyle.

2. Worldview is a sense of reality from which a person and/or a community makes sense of life; this sense of reality is a belief about what is, and a commitment as to what ought to be.

3. Lifestyle is the way in which a person or a community moves, acts, and lives; lifestyle reflects worldview.

4. The religious dimension is manifested in both religious and nonreligious traditions.

5. Religious traditions develop out of the interaction of the adherents with the sacred in time and space.

6. A religious tradition is a pattern of thinking, feeling, valuing, and acting preserved by a community and manifested in symbols, events, persons, documents, artifacts, rites, customs, beliefs, and ideas.

7. Religious communication is symbolic; it points beyond itself.

8. The religious dimension is universally manifest in human societies.

4. developing and testing concepts, generalizations, and interpretations by
    - stating and checking hypotheses
    - acquiring information through
        - listening
        - viewing
        - interpreting graphic materials
        - reading
    - locating information
    - organizing information
    - comparing and contrasting
    - analyzing information
    - making associations

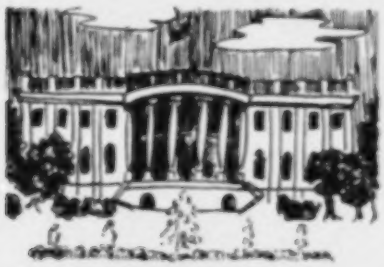
5. attaining concepts

6. attaining personal meaning of events and behaviors

7. applying generalizations and interpretations to make judgments

8. becoming sensitized through
    - exploring feelings and values
    - expressing feelings and values
    - empathizing
    - exploring implications and consequences

9. working with others effectively
    - social participation skills
    - creativity and expressive communications skills



TEACHER SELF-INSTRUCTIONAL KITS

In part because of the controversial nature of learning about religion in public schools, and in part because of confused images of what teaching about religion in elementary schools looks like in practice, the staff of the Religion in Elementary School Social Studies Project produced several kinds of media for teachers and interested community leaders. First, four self-instructional kits with a booklet of verbal material accompanied by audio-cassette tapes and/or video-tapes are available. Second, a video-tape for each grade level (one through six) describes the objectives, materials, and approaches used along with scenes of classroom interaction.

*These audio and video-tapes will be available from the Division of Instructional Research and Service (DIRS), Florida State University, Tallahassee 32306, after December 31, 1975.

The grade level video-tapes are designed for informational purposes. By watching these tapes, teachers, administrators, and community groups get an overview of the content, methods, and procedures employed in the student materials. The Teacher Self-Instructional Kits, however, are designed primarily for educational purposes:

KIT I: Consisting of a booklet and one audio-cassette, this kit presents the Supreme Court's 1963 majority opinion on the Abingdon-Murray cases for analysis; offers diverse definitions of "religion" so that participants may refine their own definition; discusses several views of "objectivity" in light of the Court's usage and in the context of religion study; and urges participants to develop and warrant their views on religion study in elementary school social studies.

KIT II: Consisting of a booklet and an audio-cassette, this kit confronts participants with their own conceptions of appropriate teacher competencies and characteristics, relating them to the demands of teaching about religion; asks participants to review the RESS rationale and objectives; and allows an opportunity to assess the internal consistency of Project approaches to learning about religion.

KIT III: Consisting of a booklet and a series of brief video-tapes showing classroom interaction, this kit offers a variety of classroom lessons from Levels One, Two, and Three. The classroom lessons are categorized by the type of instructional objectives sought. Participants are asked to assess the lessons and their classroom use against 1) their conception of "religion" study and 2) their conception of effective elementary school teaching and learning.

KIT IV: Consisting of a booklet and a series of brief video-tapes showing classroom interaction, this kit is similar to KIT III except that it is intended for fourth, fifth, and sixth grade teachers and uses lessons and classroom scenes from those levels.

Normally, teachers would use KITS I, II, and III if they are in-service or pre-service primary level instructors, or KITS IV, V, AND VI if they are in-service or pre-service teachers at the fourth, fifth, or sixth grade level.

TEACHER SELF-INSTRUCTIONAL KIT I: WHAT IS RELIGION?

KIT I confronts educators with the most perplexing material in the whole matter of teaching about religion in public schools--perplexing in that its content is at the basis of the public and educational confusion. Persons using the KIT are asked to read an abridged version of the Supreme Court decision (Schempp-Murray cases, 1963), several diverse definitions of "religion," a discussion of "objectivity," and an argument for learning about religions in elementary schools.

OBJECTIVES

After reading the material provided in KIT I, each participant will be able to:

1. Summarize the Supreme Court's interpretation of the First Amendment to the Constitution which led to the prohibition of the practice of religion in public schools when sponsored by the state (i.e., prescribed reading of the Bible and prayer).

2. State the Court's opinion regarding the significance of learning about religion in public school educational programs.

3. Distinguish between a "community of learning" and a "community of believers" in order to understand the proper role of religion in public education.

4. Define "objectivity" and show how an "objective" study of religion may also include an "appreciative" study of religion.

5. State several definitions of "religion" which are appropriate as guides for instructional programs about religion in public education.

6. Take a stand on teaching about religion in the regular social studies program in elementary schools, and offer a supporting argument for your position.

TWO EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

The experimental version of Teacher Self-Instructional Kit I was submitted to two types of evaluation. First, religion scholars and educators were invited to review the Kit and provide written comments and suggestions for revision. Second, the Kit was used with approximately one hundred pre-service teachers in university classes, in order to determine strengths and weaknesses for future revisions. The following sections present the major conclusions of these evaluations for revising KIT I.

I REVIEWS BY RELIGION SCHOLARS AND EDUCATORS

While KIT I was being tested in a teacher-training setting, the RESS staff sought reactions to and evaluations of the Kit from a number of scholars involved in the issue of religion in public education. Constructive comments and criticism were received from:

Dr. Francis J. Buckley, S.J.
(Department of Theology - University of San Francisco)

Dr. Charles H. Reynolds
(Department of Religious Studies - University of Tennessee)

Dr. Rollin S. Armour
(Head of Department of Religion - Auburn University)

Dr. James S. Ackerman
(Institute on Teaching the Bible in Secondary English - Indiana University)

Dr. Nicholas Piediscalzi
(Public Education Religion Studies Center - Wright State University)

Dr. Thomas Kraabel
(Chairman, Religious Studies - University of Minnesota)

Dr. Edwin Gaustad
(Department of History - University of California, Riverside)

There was a general consensus among these scholars that the Kit was informative, well organized, and well written. They found Kit I to be "straight forward and easy to follow," so structured that a teacher new to the problems could easily approach and deal with them.

Kit I was described by the scholars as containing an excellent choice and use of behavioral objectives, an outstanding selection of reading, and procedures varied and interesting with a clear format.

Professor Kraabel expressed concern in Kit I with the problem of "objectivity" in the study of religion. He feels Kit I should emphasize a step beyond the usual conception of an "objective" approach because "too much of our objective teaching turns out to be destructive" (i.e., when an instructor implies that all religions are equally valid because they are equally invalid). The step beyond the "objective" (dissective) approach would focus on concepts emphasizing "discovery," "empathy," and "synthesis." As he said in a letter:

I realize that you are fully aware of the problem which Bob Michaelson characterizes as "reversing the miracle of Cana" (p.37) but it seems so fundamental to me now that I suggest that something be added specifically on it, perhaps as item "f" on p.41. The problem grows a basic presupposition of education, namely, that any subject has been badly taught if the student's prior interest in it is destroyed in the process. No political scientist wants to send his students out from class saying "You'll never catch me at a precinct caucus after <u>that</u>!" Similarly, what literature teacher could consider herself successful if her class <u>ended</u> her students' interest in reading Shakespeare? Who would want to teach music history in such a way that students afterward listened only to hard rock or the stock reports? Yet the "objective" study of religion has a way of destroying students' interest in religion, traditional or post-traditional; we would agree that that is bad teaching, yet it happens all too often, and--I am convinced--usually that is because of the teacher's extreme fear of appearing something other than "neutral." Look at it in three chronological stages:

I. Indoctrination, "teaching religion" within "a community of believers." This has been and still is a valid approach; almost all learning of religion over the centuries has happened in this kind of context. But it is not what you or I want to do in public education....

II. "Learning about religions" in an objective, neutral fashion in public education. This is nearer where we are; it is legal and all of that, but interest in the subject (in the <u>subject</u>, not to mention--for the present--learning about

the subject) gets destroyed more often here, I would say, than in approach I. The danger is "religious studies as autopsy," or in the manner of the professor dealing with the frog in an introductory zoology class; after he is finished, so is the frog--it lies there in bits and pieces. This happens in Religious Studies courses in countless ways: when the impression is given that myth is false or "pre-scientific" (which for students often means the same thing), when the instructor implies that all relgiions are equally valid because they are equally invalid, etc., etc. We would agree that this is a travesty of what we really want to be doing, but with teachers and students and parents coming too abruptly out of stage I, it is too often what we get.

I am convinced there is a stage III: in that stage, the frog gets up and hops away after the class. You might argue that stage III is just stage II, "learning about religion," done correctly. I would prefer to separate II from III because too much of our objective teaching turns out to be destructive; there are too many horrible examples, the danger is too great. In talking about stage III we will often use words like "empathy," "synthesis," "post-traditional" and the like, but perhaps its most important characteristic is that it is beyond both I and II, it is neither "indoctrination" nor "neutrality," both terms which in the past had their positive connotation but which now need to be left behind. There are the germs of a stage III, I believe, in some of the learning theory discussed in Kit II, particularly in words like "discovery;" such things need to be pulled out, shown over and over again to teachers, discussed and dealt with--at the college level, at least--with students. I repeat: I know you all reject the excesses of stage II as much as those of stage I; the problems inherent in stage I are behind us, for the most part; those of stage II are not, and it seems necessary in the mid-'70s to guard against them as diligently as we avoided "indoctrination" in the '60s.

A. "May We Teach About Religion .... Legally?"

The sub-section entitled "The Court Speaks" received some excellent suggestions. It was recommended that in this section the copy could be given a more obvious organization, with caps, underlining, numbering of important points, etc. As it now reads, it is difficult to determine if you are reading Supreme Court text or RESS commentary and synthesis.

The introduction to "The Court Speaks" raises the subject of "creating a context for value formation" (p.4, line 14) and assumes that the reader will know what this means. Dr. Kraabel wondered if the concept of "value formation" may be beyond the student teacher's understanding, and in fact his question was valid. Very few of the education students in the min-courses (where we field tested the Kit) had dealt with values before. An expansion on this theme would seem appropriate.

The second paragraph on page 4 summarizes the Supreme Court's rulings of the early 1960s. It has been suggested that the emphasis be on what the Court brought about as a gain, not a loss, rather than emphasizing the prohibition of indoctrination.

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The last paragraph of page 12 refers to a "religion of secularism" and it has been suggested that a footnote be provided with a more thorough explanation of the term or refer the reader to page 17 where it is discussed more thoroughly.

A guided reading question (p.6, #5) and its answer (p.14, #5) is discussed by Dr. Buckley. ("How would you distinguish between what is appropriate for a community of learning (an educational community in a public institution from what may be appropriate for a community of believers)?" page 6).

He feels this question sets up artificial boundaries between religion and education - that a community of learners can be a community of believers and vice versa. Religion can foster variety and foster inquiry. Good education also promotes commitments and ways of being in the world. He suggests this question be rephrased or omitted.

B. "Defining Religion: What Counts As 'Religion'?"

An initial exercise in this section asks the student teacher to answer a number of questions dealing with their definition of religion. They are designed to provide a basis for reflection and critical examination of one's definition and the preconceptions the definition will reveal. Dr. Reynolds voices the concern that this particular method for achieving student involvement has the potential of making the student feel ignorant. He maintains that any definition of religion given prior to reading the materials that follow is probably going to appear naive once the materials are read.

The last two paragraphs of page 17 deal with the establishment of secularism as the norm and the relationship between education and religion (by David E. Engle). It was felt that these two paragraphs should be highlighted, as they deal with important issues that need more attention.

There was a question raised as to the relevance of the Harvey Cox definition of religion. Is Cox's use of "story" too trendy and one-sided to have much staying power, and will it not be out-of-date in the near future? The last two paragraphs of the lengthy Cox statement seem to be the most powerful, and perhaps they could serve as the focus to the Cox statement.

C. "The Problem of Objectivity"

The discussion between Drs. Spivey, Michaelsen, and Gaustad dealing with a "critical-appreciative" study of religion was generally well received by both scholars and students. There was a suggestion, however, that the first part of the conversation (p.33, line 17 - p.34, line 23) may be confusing as it involves the whole issue of objective versus subjective truth without shedding much light. Since the essential points are stated much more clearly on page 37, it has been suggested to omit this first part of the dialogue.

During the course of the dialogue there is reference by Dr. Michaelsen to reversing the "miracle of Cana (John 2:1-11)"in treating the subject of religion (p.37, top). A footnote may be appropriate here, explaining the context and the meaning of this biblical reference.

D. "Why Teach About Religion in the Elementary School Social Studies Program?"

In this section, students are asked to consider the "appropriateness" of a number of statements regarding religion and education. Statement #2 states that educators cannot teach for commitment to a particular religious tradition but learning about religion will make students more religious (a statement intended to illicit disagreement). In discussing this comment, RESS states that as educators we cannot teach for religious commitment but only for <u>understanding</u> about religion. Dr. Buckley questions whether this distinction between understanding and commitment is real.

> *"In the real world judgment tends to follow understanding. The true and the good are rationally distinct but really related. Critical-appreciative study definitely leads to judgments about truth and goodness and value, and the students will want to draw conclusions for their own lives from their discussions. To make such judgments purely relative ("this is true for them") seems in fact to be teaching relativism."*

It is not the intention of RESS to be teaching pure relativism, but treatment such as this may appear to give that impression.

II TRIAL USE OF THE KIT WITH PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

Two sections of a four week mini-course on Religion in Public Education were offered to students as part of a Social Foundations of Education course in the College of Education. Kits I and II served as the text for the course. The students came from a wide variety of majors (i.e., speech pathology, social welfare, music therapy, elementary education) but were all seeking a teaching certificate upon graduation. They could choose from a number of mini-courses, and would have two such experiences in the course of the academic quarter.

Some students selected this particular mini-course because the texts were provided by the instructor. Others noted that discussion was emphasized in the description of the course, and would, therefore, provide a novel experience to their undergraduate program. (Approximately half the students had no previous experience with a discussion-oriented setting, high school included). Other students felt this course would teach them how to successfully indoctrinate children into their own religious ideology. There were also some students who were curious to know what role religion could play in public education. Their presence in the course did not necessarily represent their first choice for a mini-course, but perhaps a second or even third choice.

<u>Pre-assessment of Students</u> (or - "<u>Where they were at</u>")

All students were asked at the first session to take a stand on the question; "Is learning about religion an appropriate activity in elementary school social studies programs?" A clear majority of the students favored the study of religion in public school, but in many

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cases for reasons which were antithetical to the objectives of RESS. Typical responses were:

1) "Children would learn proper values."
2) "Children don't get training at home, so the schools should provide it."
3) "Children need to learn the way of God."

Some students recognized that an important function of the schools is to teach children about diversity, religious diversity as well. A few students also recognized the role of religion in history, the arts, and society. A small minority of students were opposed to the study of religion in the public school because they felt religion belonged in the home and church, and that teachers might indoctrinate. Generally, the majority of students responded to the question with a narrow definition of religion which was primarily based upon their own religious experience.

Students also were tested on their degree of religious conservatism (fundamentalism) or liberalism.* Seventeen of the twenty-three students demonstrated very conservative tendencies (four had perfect fundamentalism scores), and the six students with religiously liberal views were basically more "liberal-conservative" than "liberal-liberal."** These scores tended to correlate with their position statements, in that those with conservative scores also tended to feel that the role of religion in the schools should serve as indoctrination.

Students were also asked what they thought was allowed and not allowed with respect to religion in the schools. (Kit I, p.3). Many of them felt that "no religious leader may enter a classroom and talk about religion." Many felt the "study of prayer and worship is not allowed in public schools." They were uncertain about teachers mentioning their religious beliefs to children, and not sure that all religions could be studied in the classroom.

Post-assessment of Students

After dealing with the issues in Kit I (legal questions, definitions of religion and objectivity, proper role of religion in public education), the students demonstrated a heightened awareness of the depth and importance of the issue. Their position was greatly altered with respect to the appropriateness of learning about religion in elementary school programs. Religion was defined in broader terms. They were able to argue for its presence in curricula based on a legal position, as well as cognitive and affective rationales. For a cognitive argument they addressed the role of religion in culture (history, science, art and music), how the school can be a source of an objective study of religion, and how one's education is not "complete" without the study of religion. They demonstrated insight into the affective benefits arguing that the presence of an objective study of religion would help children be more accepting of diversity, and would provide them with an opportunity for clarifying their own positions and therefore arriving at a greater self awareness as well as an expanded world outlook. They also demonstrated an understanding of the concept of "secularism as the norm" and its impact on education.

*J. Martin and F. Westie, "The Tolerant Personality," American Sociological Review, Volume 24 (1959), 521-528.

**The students in the second mini-course section scored in the reverse, with three-fourths of the class heavily distributed on the most "liberal" side of the scale,

For some students, the issue of values and education remained a source of confusion. Many continued to feel there is a direct linkage between teaching about religion and learning "proper values." To most of the students this course was a first exposure to this issue, and their difficulty reflected their confusion concerning "commitment," that teaching about religion leaves commitment to the students, and the teacher deals only with understanding and skill development, as do other areas of the elementary school curriculum.

An occasional student would be able to intellectually accept the RESS argument for the study of religion in public schools, but would question or reject it based upon their own religious beliefs. To explore religions other than their own was viewed as not being faithful. As one student expressed, "I believe that God deals with us specifically and in turn wants a specific kind of relationship with us. True, the choice of acceptance is left up to man, but I could not with a clear conscience sanction the study of religion on such a general, whatever-you-want-to-believe-is-all-right plane." This kind of student viewed religion as more than a subject to be studied like history or economics, and was concerned that a public school treatment would lead to a loss of belief

The college students in pre-service education programs who took this mini-course, plus students who took the course the previous year and those who used the self-instructional KIT in their elementary school methods class, were positive in their evaluation of the experience and the KIT. This was revealed by student performance, unsolicited comments, and post-instructional anonymous questionnaires. While the KIT needs further revision, the following generalizations are drawn from the experience of students in our field test groups:

1. The critical factors in opening students to learning about religion in the elementary school curriculum are a) a careful reading and discussion of the 1963 Supreme Court decision which affected the place of religion in the schools, and b) a systematic study of the definition of "religion."

    a) Few students had experienced more than newspaper articles and table talk about religion in schools, which built an adverse view of any "religion" in public schools. The intention of those who advocated any mention of religion in schools was suspect, both from those who had negative views toward "religion" and those who had rich and vivid religious experiences and convictions. Students reported that they had not thought systematically about the issue previously.

    The knowledge gained through reading the Court's arguments was a major factor in attitude change (as reported by students) especially when coupled with a discussion of the alternative courses of action in a pluralistic society.

    b) By far the majority of students entered the course with a rather conventional conception of religion which was first challenged in the opening questionnaire of KIT I, then in

the discussion of the 1963 Court decision, and most powerfully in the section on various definitions of "religion." Most students reported, and showed evidence of, a broadening of their definition. This expansion came with study of Tillich's "ultimate concerns" and Novak and Cox's "story," but also with the discussion of religion symbols and their power in Geertz and Radin. Again, for almost every student, this systematic study of "religion" was the first.

The gain in understanding of the term "religion" and its several definitions opened students not only to new conceptions of what might be "religious," but to some new images of how religious phenomena might well fit into the content of elementary school curricula, as do other social, economic, political, and personal phenomena.

2. After the Court decision and conceptions of "religion" had challenged entry attitudes toward religion study, student experience with sample instructional material and lesson plans for learning about religion in elementary schools was a powerful and synthesizing exercise. One of the strongest perplexities in discussing religion study is the absence of appropriate images of what the "academic" study of religion looks like in schools. Unlike discussions of learning political or economic concepts, religion study conjures up images of Sunday school, worship, etc. --the practice of religion, rather than an appreciative study of such phenomena. Here, the actual instructional materials provided new images which all but a very few pre-service teachers (6%) found appropriate and satisfying.

3. At the conclusion of their study of KIT I (and KIT II), most students were expressing more open reasons for religion study in the social studies curriculum of elementary schools --reasons which were more accepting of difference, more tolerant, more affirming of the right to be different, more curious about religious diversity and religious phenomena.

   Some students made very significant shifts in disposition toward learning about religion (15 to 20% of the classes) and toward openness while no student moved in the opposite direction.

4. The pre-service teachers in the mini-course program did learn as reflected on post-test scores which were significantly higher than pre-test scores. Ninety-five percent scored at least ninety percent on the post-tests for KITs I and II. The post-test position papers reflected greater knowledge and awareness in keeping with the objectives. In fact, students who did not shift their positions on religion study in public elementary schools showed increased understanding of the issues involved and had a better knowledge base for judgment, discussion, and argumentation as a result of their study.

These conclusions hold not only for those students who used the self-instructional KITs in concert with the twelve-hour classroom discussion time in the two mini-course sections, but with students who used the KITs in a six-hour mini-course, and with students who used the self-instructional KITs, independent of classroom discussions.

A most sophisticated set of instruments and analysis of data might well reveal better explanations for the shifts in position, the openness, and the growth of understanding. But KIT I does provide the instructional encounters consistent with, and leading to, successful attainment of the stated knowledge and competencies.

ADDENDUM: ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR REVISION

1. Use of caps for A Foreword (p. IV)
   note use of lower case caps for A Foreword (p. V)

2. Quote marks on Bruner quote (p. IV)

3. p. 3 chart-
   Confusion from students: they wondered if they were supposed to respond according to what they <u>feel</u> is right or what they think is legally right.
   Revised directions would correct this confusion.

4. p. 4 - top -
   Confusion due to comments in box:
   If someone checks "think not" on all of p. 3, does that mean they don't need to read KIT I?

5. Add Engles new book onto Bibliography (Paulist Press) and the new book in Harper's Issue in Education series.

6. p. 52 - should read
   Gaustad, Edwin S., Religion in America: History and Historiography, Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1973, 59
   (instead of <u>American Religious History</u>, etc.)

7. p. 52 - typo on Gaustad annotation
   "literable" should be "literature"

8. p. 52 - typo on Kliebard annotation
   "sourse" should read "source"

9. p. 53 - Panoch and Barr
   Religious Instruc. Assoc. now defunct

10. p. 19 - 3rd paragraph line 11
    inert word "some" between "and" and "contemporary"